

Haslam in brown on left, Howard center in blue

THE AMERICAN CHAPTER OF COVID-19

Note: This document includes minor formatting and typographical corrections and the addition of a photograph since its initial submission and acceptance by the Committee.

Why Congress Should More Fully Examine the Role of the University of North Carolina and Duke University in Coronavirus Research and the COVID-19 Origins Investigation

Statement for the Record

Submitted to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

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Chairman Paul, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee:

We respectfully submit this statement for inclusion in the record of the Committee's hearing on July 29th concerning Dr. Anthony Fauci, the origins of COVID-19, and federal oversight of research involving pathogens with pandemic potential.

We are private citizens who have spent years examining the documentary record concerning the origin of SARS-CoV-2, the development and funding of advanced coronavirus research, and the adequacy of the governmental and institutional systems responsible for overseeing that work. Our inquiry has relied principally upon grant applications, research proposals, published scientific papers, congressional testimony, records obtained through public-records and Freedom of Information Act requests, institutional communications, federal reports, and contemporaneous accounts.

James Haslam is the author of *COVID-19: Mystery Solved: It Leaked From a Wuhan Lab, But It's Not Chinese Junk*, a detailed account of the development and inadvertent release of SARS-CoV-2. [1] He also co-authored with Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs the report *The Most Plausible Origin of SARS-CoV-2*, which was submitted on May 21, 2025, to the World Health Organization's Scientific Advisory Group for the Origins of Novel Pathogens, commonly known as SAGO. [2] The WHO's subsequent SAGO assessment expressly acknowledged receipt of that report, although SAGO disputed important elements of its analysis. [3]

George A. Howard is a North Carolina businessman and independent scientific researcher who has co-authored numerous peer-reviewed scientific papers. His published work has received approximately 1,200 scholarly citations. He has also publicly raised concerns, together with Rutgers University microbiologist Richard H. Ebright, about the risks, transparency, and oversight associated with extreme virological research conducted at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

We do not ask the Committee to accept any contested origin hypothesis as an established fact. We do ask that Congress examine the full range of credible evidence and devote substantially greater attention to the American institutions, technologies, researchers, funding systems, and oversight failures that may have contributed to the circumstances under investigation.

Two Distinct Laboratory-Origin Hypotheses

Public discussion commonly treats the laboratory-origin explanation as a single theory. In reality, it includes materially different hypotheses.

The view most often advanced by laboratory-origin researchers and advocates is that SARS-CoV-2 emerged through an accident involving Chinese scientists conducting coronavirus research at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, funded by the United States government through EcoHealth Alliance. Under that general account, Chinese personnel themselves collected, manipulated, cultured, or otherwise worked with a precursor or engineered virus, and the pathogen escaped through infection of a researcher, a laboratory-safety failure, or another accidental route.

Mr. Haslam's hypothesis is different.

Based on the chronology and documentary record he has assembled, he argues that investigators should examine whether Australian virologist Danielle Anderson, who worked at the Wuhan Institute of Virology and was associated with the Duke-NUS Medical School in Singapore, may have played a direct role in the initial release.

Haslam's analysis further proposes that her Wuhan experiments with the world's only known laboratory colony of Chinese horseshoe bats at the WIV were motivated by her grant-application team's desire to improve its funding prospects through the development of a transmissible vaccine or immunizing agent intended for bat populations, rather than merely the creation of a pathogen for conventional laboratory study.

Circumstantial Evidence Concerning Dr. Danielle Anderson and the Release of COVID-19 in Wuhan

Anderson was named in the 2018 DEFUSE proposal to lead animal studies involving experimental infection of wild-caught Chinese horseshoe bats. [9] Haslam contends that the proposed virus or vaccine would have been produced through Baric's work at UNC, developed or tested in bats at Rocky Mountain Laboratories, and then transferred to Wuhan for trials.

Anderson unquestionably worked inside the Wuhan BSL-4 laboratory during 2019 and completed her final stint in November, very close to the earliest recognized outbreak. [5] She was apparently the only foreign scientist regularly working there. [5]

Her 2019 federal-grant curriculum vitae reportedly mentioned “coronavirus replication” and extensive experience designing bat experiments. Haslam contrasts that description with her later public statement that her Wuhan BSL-4 work concerned Ebola. This establishes relevant expertise and raises a legitimate records question, although it does not, standing alone, establish that she handled SARS-CoV-2 or any precursor in Wuhan.

DEFUSE contemplated testing bat-vaccine candidates on wild-caught *Rhinolophus* bats at the WIV. [9] Peter Daszak later stated that Anderson had confirmed the existence of a WIV bat colony. Haslam therefore infers that her otherwise poorly explained presence in the BSL-4 facility was connected to those bat trials.

Haslam also relies upon cellphone-location evidence obtained by NBC News. [4] He argues that Anderson's Singapore-linked device appeared around the remote BSL-4 facility from July through October 2019, disappeared during a period of reportedly diminished laboratory phone activity, and later returned around the time Linfa Wang visited in November. [12] The underlying cellphone analysis was disputed from its first publication and does not itself demonstrate an accident, infection, quarantine, or cleanup. [4] It nevertheless identifies a factual question that Congress can test by obtaining the underlying records.

Anderson left Wuhan on November 29 and did not return. [5] Her boss, Linfa Wang, resigned as director of Duke-NUS's emerging-diseases program on January 10, 2020, [6]—the date the SARS-CoV-2 genome became public. Haslam treats that timing as suggestive of recognition and institutional reaction. Standing alone, neither departure proves knowledge of an accident.

Haslam also considers Anderson's later public statements incomplete. She stated that she was tested for SARS-CoV-2 before vaccination and had never been infected. Haslam has called for the release of her earlier, apparently 2020, antibody-testing records, together with her 2019 laboratory notebooks, material-transfer agreements, shipping records, emails, and related institutional communications.

These are reasonable investigative requests. The absence of those records is not affirmative proof that Anderson was infected. It does, however, prevent the hypothesis from being fully and fairly tested.

This hypothesis remains disputed and should not be presented as proven. It is nevertheless distinct from the prevailing laboratory-leak account and should be evaluated on its evidence rather than merged into a generic narrative involving unidentified Chinese researchers.

The Haslam-Sachs submission to SAGO placed this alternative account before an international scientific body and required SAGO to address it in the course of its origins assessment. [2] [3] That process does not establish the hypothesis. It demonstrates, however, that Mr. Haslam's work has advanced beyond informal online speculation and entered the formal international debate concerning the origin of SARS-CoV-2.

We respectfully suggest that the Committee examine the competing laboratory-origin hypotheses separately. The identity, institutional affiliation, purpose, timing, and location of the relevant work are not secondary details. They bear directly upon questions of responsibility, federal funding, international collaboration, laboratory safety, record preservation, and the accuracy of representations made to government agencies and the public.

The Underexamined Role of the University of North Carolina

In our judgment, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has received substantially less scrutiny than its scientific importance warrants.

Public attention has understandably centered on the Wuhan Institute of Virology. Yet the relevant coronavirus-research network was not confined to China. It included American federal agencies, universities, nonprofit intermediaries, contractors, international research partners, and scientists who exchanged funding, technology, viral samples, research methods, and expertise across institutional and national boundaries.

Within that network, the laboratory led by Dr. Ralph Baric at UNC occupied an exceptionally important position. UNC was not merely a passive funding recipient or distant academic

observer. Its researchers possessed advanced capabilities in coronavirus genetics, reverse genetics, infectious-clone systems, viral reconstruction, and the evaluation of altered coronaviruses in laboratory models.

For example, on January 31, 2020, Scripps professor Kristian Andersen concluded that the new SARS-CoV-2 genome “looks engineered” after comparing it with a bat sample called RaTG13, which Shi Zhengli of the WIV had published only days earlier. [7]

The comparison of RaTG13 and SARS-CoV-2, including the PRRAR insertion, is as follows:

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RaTG13:
YECDIPIGAGICASYQTQTNS_____RSVASQSIIAYTMSLGAENSVAYSNN
SARS-CoV-2:
YECDIPIGAGICASYQTQTNSPRRARSVASQSIIAYTMSLGAENSVAYSNN
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Under the 2018 DEFUSE proposal and related 2019 NIAID grants, Baric testified that Shi was to share samples such as RaTG13 with him before publication. Although Shi could not isolate a live RaTG13 virus, Baric had written that inserting a furin cleavage site could help “recover non-cultivable viruses.” [9]

Importantly, Baric's cell cultures preserve the furin cleavage site, whereas Shi's Vero cells delete it. In this framework, Baric would “introduce” a furin cleavage site, such as PRRAR, and then “provide” Linfa Wang with the resulting chimera for testing on Chinese bats at the WIV. [9] [14]

The next day, February 1, 2020, Fauci participated in a hastily convened teleconference organized by Andersen and other prominent virologists. [7] [8] Two days later, both Andersen and Baric were invited to present engineering evidence to National Academies officials and representatives of agencies including the FBI, CIA, and White House. [9]

A redacted Slack message dated February 3, 2020, revealed in Baric's testimony, showed Andersen writing: [10]

“I should mention that Ralph Baric pretty much attacked me on the call with NASEM, essentially calling anything related to potential lab escape ludicrous, crackpot theories. I wonder if he, himself, is worried about this, too.”

For another example, on March 5, 2020, United States government biodefense officials asked Baric in the Red Dawn emails whether SARS-CoV-2 contained “any restriction sites.” [9]

Baric responded:

“No, there is absolutely no evidence of genetic engineering.”

SARS-CoV-2 contains five restriction sites, yielding six pieces. [9]

Baric later testified:

“We think our [UNC] approach is safer [than the WIV] because we've divided the genome into six pieces.” [9]

In DEFUSE, Baric proposed to use:

“six contiguous cDNA pieces linked by unique restriction endonuclease sites.”

Questions the Hearing Left Unanswered

1. The Role of Danielle Anderson and Duke-NUS

What was Fauci's $82M CREID contractor, Dani Anderson, doing inside the Wuhan BSL4?

Why did her boss, Linfa Wang, resign as director of Duke's EID program on January 10, 2020, the same day the first SARS-CoV-2 genome sequence was publicly released? [6]

What did Duke and Duke-NUS know about Danielle Anderson's work in Wuhan, her involvement in the DEFUSE proposal, the proposed experiments involving Chinese horseshoe bats, and any relationship between those activities and the earliest outbreak?

Did Danielle Anderson undergo antibody, PCR, or other testing during or after 2019 that could establish whether she had been exposed to SARS-CoV-2 or a related virus? Who possesses those records?

What laboratory notebooks, material-transfer agreements, shipping documents, cellphone-location records, experimental protocols, sequence data, and institutional communications would confirm or disprove Mr. Haslam's proposed pathway?

2. Rocky Mountain Laboratories (RML) and Vincent Munster

What did Fauci discuss with Rocky Mountain Lab during weekly teleconferences that began in January 2020?

What did Vincent Munster present to Fauci on January 27? Why were Munster and Baric's names provided to Fauci on that same date?

In 2016, Fauci gave a joint presentation with Munster. That same year, Baric and Munster were infecting Egyptian fruit bats. Why are these same bats the reservoir host for SARS2?

What was RML doing with both DARPA Preempt and DEFUSE projects in 2018-19? How would Munster run “experimental trials on Rhinolophus bats,” which are found in Wuhan? Is this why Fauci built a $100M Rhinolophus bat breeding facility at RML?

In 2014, Fauci told Francis Collins that RML was developing a new (self spreading) vaccine platform targeting wildlife vaccination. But it was only tested in a mouse model and “very early stage of development.” How far advanced was this technology in 2019?

RML was cited in a recent Nature paper on the theory that COVID was a bat vaccine. Does Fauci deny that COVID was a bat vaccine developed at RML?

Do you have an alibi for Rocky Mountain Lab?

3. Scientific Integrity, Research Methods, and Disclosures

During the NASEM meeting on February 3, why did Baric “attack” Andersen for bringing attention to the furin cleavage site? [10] [11] In 2018, RML published a paper about a furin cleavage site needed in a bat virus for “intracellular proteases.”

What information concerning Dr. Baric's work, the DEFUSE proposal, furin-cleavage-site insertion, coronavirus reconstruction, restriction sites, or six-piece viral assembly was presented during the February 2020 teleconferences and National Academies discussions?

Why did Dr. Baric reportedly characterize laboratory escape as a “ludicrous” or “crackpot” theory during the National Academies discussion, and what evidence did he possess at that time that justified such certainty? [10]

Why did Dr. Baric tell government biodefense officials that there was “absolutely no evidence of genetic engineering” in response to a question concerning restriction sites, when SARS-CoV-2 contained five such sites and his own UNC platform assembled coronavirus genomes from six pieces?

What viral samples, sequence information, constructs, protocols, or other materials did Shi Zhengli and the WIV provide to Dr. Baric or UNC before publication, and when were those materials received?

4. Federal Agency Involvement and Decision-Making

When Major Murphy leaked DARPA DEFUSE, he claimed Fauci funded it? Daszak & Baric split the bid and resubmitted as the 2R01 and U01 CREID grant.

Why did Fauci blind copy (bcc) John Mascola on his reply to Kristian Andersen? Andersen testified he, not Fauci, wanted to contact the FBI.

Did Fauci or his “NIH staff” invite Baric to the February 1, 2020 call? Baric first testified that “NIH staff” invited him, but now he claims not to know. [10]

Why didn't Fauci contact the FBI? Fauci testified that he did not, yet Andersen wanted to contact the FBI on January 30.

Why did Fauci's office nominate Munster and his RML boss, Heinz Feldmann, for the WHO Mission to China in February 2020?

When did Dr. Fauci first learn that Kristian Andersen and other scientists believed SARS-CoV-2 might have been engineered or associated with laboratory research?

Did Dr. Fauci, NIAID, NIH, or any other federal agency request laboratory records, sequencing data, viral constructs, material-transfer agreements, or explanations from Dr. Baric or UNC after concerns about possible engineering were raised?

5. Institutional Accountability and Internal Reviews

When did UNC's and University System's institutional chain of command first learn that SARS-CoV-2 might have arisen from coronavirus research connected to Dr. Baric's collaborators, methods, proposals, or technology, and what do they know today?

What did Dr. Baric tell UNC's Institutional Biosafety Committee, laboratory-safety personnel, department leadership, Gillings School leadership, research administrators, university counsel, senior executives, trustees, and federal officials during January and February 2020?

Did UNC initiate an internal inquiry into its coronavirus work, international collaborations, viral-sample transfers, DEFUSE-related activities, restriction-site methods, or possible relationship to SARS-CoV-2? If so, who conducted that inquiry, and where are its records?

Were relevant records preserved, withheld, redacted, deleted, reclassified, transferred to legal counsel, or otherwise removed from ordinary institutional custody after a possible research-related origin was raised?

What did the leadership of UNC, the UNC System, Duke, and Duke-NUS know; when did they know it; what representations did they make to federal agencies and the public; and what actions did they take in response?

Notes and Sources

1. James Haslam, *COVID-19: Mystery Solved: It Leaked From a Wuhan Lab, But It's Not Chinese Junk* (2024/2025). Publisher/edition details should be added by the authors.

2. Jeffrey D. Sachs & James Haslam, "The Most Plausible Origin of SARS-CoV-2," submitted to WHO SAGO, May 21, 2025.

3. World Health Organization, Scientific Advisory Group for the Origins of Novel Pathogens (SAGO), "Independent Assessment of the Origins of SARS-CoV-2," June 27, 2025 (acknowledging and disputing elements of the Haslam/Sachs submission). See also James Haslam, "A Response to World Health Organization," Substack, June 2025.

4. NBC News, "Report says cellphone data suggests October shutdown at Wuhan lab, but experts are skeptical," May 2020. Note: this report describes an Oct. 7–24, 2019 window; the July–October date range and the specific attribution of the device to Anderson in the statement above should be checked directly against the underlying report and Mr. Haslam's analysis (see note 12) before filing.

5. South China Morning Post, "Only foreign scientist in Wuhan lab says Covid-19 leak highly unlikely," June 2021 (Bloomberg-sourced interview with Danielle Anderson); see also Newsweek, June 2021.

6. "Linfa Wang," Wikipedia (confirms resignation as Duke-NUS EID Programme director announced January 2020, effective September 2020).

7. PolitiFact, "No, emails don't show early agreement the virus was engineered," June 2, 2021 (quoting Kristian Andersen's January 31, 2020 email to Anthony Fauci in full context, including Andersen's own caveats and the subsequent March 2020 Nature Medicine "Proximal Origin" paper).

8. Fox News, "Fauci, top scientist called to brief House committees; phone call questioned," (on the February 1, 2020 call and subsequent congressional inquiry by Reps. Jim Jordan and James Comer).

9. Jeffrey D. Sachs & James Haslam, "Did Ralph Baric at UNC Create SARS-CoV-2?," Brownstone Institute, March 18, 2026 (also syndicated at The Unz Review and jeffsachs.org).

10. James Haslam, "Baric Testified Again But Still Hasn't Provided an Alibi," Substack (reproducing an exchange identified as committee testimony in which Dr. Baric is questioned about the February 3, 2020 Slack message). Editorial note: for a Statement for the Record, the official

committee hearing transcript itself—obtainable from committee staff—should be cited as the primary source in place of, or alongside, this secondary republication.

11. James Haslam, "What's in Your Freezer, Dr. Baric?," Substack (same testimony exchange).

12. James Haslam, "Let's Be Blunt: SARS2 Leaked From the BSL4," Substack (Haslam's own analysis of the cellphone-location data as it relates to Anderson and Linfa Wang).

13. Jon Fleetwood, *"SARS-CoV-2 Furin Cleavage Site Sits At Exact Amino Acid Residue Location Designated by 2018 DEFUSE Document,"* Substack.